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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that young people's positive attitudes toward reading and writing can be shaped through the use of literature that treats those activities as valuable, a content analysis was conducted of Caldecott Medal winners from 1938 through 1981 and of Newbery Medal winners from 1922 to 1981 to determine how these books dealt with reading and writing. The results showed that one Caldecott and 16 Newbery Medal winners used reading and writing as a main theme or related aspect of plot or characterization. The books depicted reading and writing as important activities for survival, enjoyment, and the gaining and sharing of knowledge. (Summaries of the 17 books are included, along with instructional strategies designed for use with reluctant readers and writers.) (FL)

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Developing Concepts of Reading and Writing Through Literature

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Traditionally elementary school curricula have focused on the cognitive rather than the affective dimensions of reading and writing. A major goal of most language programs has been the development of capable readers and writers. Smith and Barrett (1974) indicate that in many reading programs word recognition and comprehension are the focus, while neglected is the affective dimension that includes interests, attitudes and values related to reading. Similarly most writing programs ignore the development of the affective dimension while focusing on the mechanics of handwriting and functional writing.

Developing capable readers and writers ought to be a major goal of any language program. In addition however, a related goal of instruction ought to be the development of students who value reading and writing and are committed to these activities. Attitudes and concepts ought to be developed about reading and writing as useful activities and important sources of information, personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

These positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing may be shaped in the classroom through the introduction and use of children's literature. Certain books written specifically for and about children and youth treat reading and writing as valuable and important behaviors. In many of these books, characters who routinely engage in and are committed to reading and writing are appropriate role models. Involvement with these books is important for students who do not possess positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing.

Background

The power of what is read to influence and change attitudes is well recognized. Recent extensive content analyses of children's books and basal readers have resulted from concern for the effect that biased or stereotyped representations have for shaping children's concepts (Chall, et al., 1979; Madsen & Wickersham, 1980; Taylor, 1980). Zimet (1976), in Print and Prejudice, reviews research supporting the belief that print is a powerful catalyst for change. Thoroughly documented is the idea that attitudes and behaviors can be modified in predicted directions through consciously controlling and presenting content. Some

researchers have examined the importance of reading to main characters and in themes of children's books (Parker, 1979; Snyder, 1979).

A survey of ten first grade basal readers used in Canadian and American schools focused on role models available to students (Snyder, 1979). In these basals male story characters and animals were portrayed as readers more often than female characters. Of the two kinds of printed materials read by characters, story books were read more often than signs were read. Snyder suggests that basal materials need to include both more representations of reading used in careers of men and women and examples of parents and teachers reading in realistic situations. Snyder contends that children's attitudes toward reading can be changed by altering and controlling the materials they read.

Trade books in which the main theme involved reading or where characters were in some way involved in reading were reviewed by Parker (1979). Summaries of selected preschool and primary books indicate many which focus on the excitement of learning to read and include the pleasures and delights of reading as well as its importance for the acquisition of knowledge. These books present reading as a worthwhile, highly respected achievement for children regardless of sex or grade level. They stress the pleasures to be derived from reading all types of printed materials and offer valuable role models with which young children can identify. Parker's summaries of intermediate grade books also indicate the existence of book characters as positive role models who show through reading that their lives are more manageable and satisfying. She contends that as students identify with these characters they will internalize their positive values and begin to select reading as a pleasurable and rewarding activity.

This Review

Books chosen for the review described here were not identified beforehand as involving reading and writing. Caldecott and Newbery Medal books were selected since these books, granted awards by the Children's Services Division of the American Library Association, represent titles best known by teachers and librarians (Sutherland & Arbuthnot, 1977). The Caldecott Medal is given to the illustrator

of the most distinguished picture book and the Newbery Medal is given to the author of the most distinguished contribution to literature published for children. Since these books have high visibility with teachers and librarians and are often read to students or suggested for students to read, many enjoy a special popularity which other books do not.

The purpose of this review was to examine Caldecott (1938-1981) and Newbery (1922-1981) Medal books to determine in which books reading or writing was either a main theme or related aspect of plot or characterization. Books were read by one of four readers and roles of reading and writing were examined and classified as:

1) main theme or crucial aspect of plot or characterization (reading or writing was of central importance and engaged in by the main or secondary character and necessary to communication of theme or plot).
2) related aspect of plot or characterization, but not critical to either (reading or writing was engaged in by the main or secondary character but was not absolutely necessary to communication of theme or plot).
3) incidental or occasional (reading or writing occurred but was non-essential to theme, plot or characterization).
4) non-occurring (neither activity was included).

Three librarians also independently classified each book. Agreement between readers and librarians was reached on all but two books, for which joint decisions were then made. Subjective judgments involved in making these decisions should be noted.

The roles of reading and writing in Caldecott and Newbery books were ... classified and appear in Table I. In the majority of these books reading and writing are incidental or non-occurring activities. Tables 2 and 3 contain titles of books by award and year in which reading and writing are included as main themes or related aspects of plot or characterization. Summaries of these 17 books follow with a focus on the roles of reading and writing.

Book Summaries - Table I

Abe Lincoln by I. & E. d'Aulaire

The drive to learn to read and the desire to read are directly related to Abe's achievement as an adult. The importance of reading, as Abe grows from child to adult is apparent in this story which depicts him reading the Bible,

stories of George Washington, Pilgrim's Progress and every other book he could find. He walks miles to borrow books, reads as he plows the fields, studies to be a lawyer and becomes President. Abe continues to read as an adult as his three sons are described crawling over him as he lies reading on the carpet in the parlor.

Invincible Louisa by Cornelia Meigs

This biography presents Louisa May Alcott's life and thoroughly documents her early interest and positive attitudes about the extensive reading she does. Louisa's pleasure in writing poetry, stories and a personal journal precede her writing of magazine articles and the well known books Little Women, Little Men and Jo's Boys, which earn her an income. Her lifelong commitment to both activities are central aspects of Louisa's character throughout the book and the source of her success and fame.

Roller Skates by Ruth Sawyer

Set in New York City in the 1890's eleven year-old Lucinda is left with two teachers while her parents travel abroad. The excitement, enchantment and pleasure Lucinda derives from reading the works of Shakespeare, Tolstoy and Kipling, among other authors, is clearly evident in this book. Lucinda experiences satisfaction from keeping a diary in which she writes daily. She also writes special verses for her Christmas gifts and writes several plays. Her positive feelings about writing are evident when she asserts that she would rather write a play than act in one.

Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes

In this Revolutionary War period story, fourteen year-old Johnny, a silversmith's apprentice, is crippled in an accident with molten silver. His ability to read is crucial when he becomes a dispatch rider and messenger for the colonials. He reads newspapers and as many of the books from a friend's library as he can. Johnny loves to read and "would sit with books piled to the ceiling," reading for learning, personal satisfaction and enjoyment.

Amos Fortune, Free Man by Elizabeth Yates

This is the story of an African who is brought to America as a slave, where he is given the name Amos and taught to read and write by his master. He learns from the Bible and spends much of his free time reading it and newspapers. When he is freed at age 60 he sets up a tannery in New Hampshire using his reading ability to function as a member of the community. He continues to read, joining the local library and subscribing to the newspaper. In this story reading is valuable to Amos as an activity which allows him to function and survive as a well informed citizen.

Carry On Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham

Both reading and writing are constant themes in this story of Nat Bowditch's life from childhood to middle-age. A reader interested in science and math, Nat teaches himself to read Latin and French so that he can pursue astronomy, physics and philosophy. Through reading Nat satisfies his curiosities and gains knowledge and understanding that shape the remainder of his life. He takes bounteous notes about all he reads and compiles a series of note books as well as a book on navigation. As captian of a ship, he mathematically pilots it safely home through dense fog convincing many doubters of the worth of "book sailing."

Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth George Speare

Reading is a central theme in this 1770's story of Kit Taylor in Connecticut. Kit, who reads more often for enjoyment than for religious reasons, is suspect not only because she is a female who can read but also because she does read for pleasure. She gives secret lessons in reading and writing to a poor child who cannot attend school, for which she is tried and acquitted. The changing view of reading is put nicely in this quote by the child's father "Well, this is a new country over here, and who says it may not be just as needful for a woman to read as a man?"

Up a Road Slowly by Irene Hunt

Set in contemporary times, this book describes ten years of Julia's life beginning at age seven when she goes to live with an aunt following her mother's death. Reading and writing are central activities throughout Julia's adolescence as she grows from a girl into a woman. The reading of poetry and books both precedes and accompanies her writing of stories. She writes both research papers for school and poems and stories for herself. Her uncle reads and critically comments on her work which Julia then revises and rewrites. Before she leaves for college one of her stories is published in a magazine. This book describes Julia as she moves through various stages of the writing process and clearly communicates the satisfaction she derives from both reading and writing.

Mrs. Frisbee and the Rats of NIMH by Robert C. O'Brien

As a result of injections of DNA and steroids experimental rats at the National Institute of Mental Health become intelligent. They are taught to read and escape to a nearby farm. They can read and understand whole libraries of books and because of this are able to develop their own society. Reading is a critically valuable skill in that it allows the acquisition of knowledge necessary for survival. Furthermore, through reading the rats realize the practical and ethical short comings of their existence which is dependent upon stealing from others. Through reading the rats wish to better themselves and they plan a more ethical and independent future society.

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson

Reading for personal development and as a means of gaining knowledge, understanding and insight into the world are themes of this book. Fifth grader Leslie moves with her parents who are both writers to a rural community and a new school. Leslie develops a friendship with a classmate Jeff, to whom her family's life without a television set and immersion in books and print is totally different. New worlds of learning open up for Jess as he reads. He and Leslie often retreat into the woods to a special fantasy kingdom they have created called Terabithia. Reading finally is a solace to Jess who must cope with Leslie's unexpected death.

A Gathering of Days by Joan Blos

This book is in the form of a diary written from 1830 to 1832 by 13 year-old Cathy who lives on a New Hampshire farm. The importance of reading in the lives of Cathy's family is evident as the Bible, newspapers, letters, an almanac and books on quilting and home remedies are read and prized. In the difficult but peaceful life she leads Cathy's diary functions as a way for her to both identify and share her feelings and voice her frustrations and fears. Apparent throughout the book is the personal satisfaction Cathy gains from making almost daily entries and rereading previously written accounts of thoughts and happenings.

Book Summaries - Table 2

Young Fu by Elizabeth Lewis

Both reading and writing are related aspects of characterization but are not the main theme of this book. Young Fu is a Chinese boy apprenticed to a coppersmith in Chungking in pre-revolutionary China. Young Fu's desire to read and write is fueled by practical considerations as he states, "He who can read and write is not so easily cheated of his rights." Young Fu learns both skills, become educated, gains the respect and admiration of his friends and co-workers, and is a successful young man.

The Door in the Wall by Marguerite de Angeli

Set in 13th century England this book's main character is ten year-old Robin who is crippled and cared for in St. Mark's monastery by Brother Luke. Robin learns to read, write, swim and do carpentry work under Brother Luke's direction. In this story Brother Luke describes adversity as a wall through which there is always a door or way to overcome the difficulty if one works hard enough and looks far enough. Brother Luke teaches Robin that his courage and carpentry skills as well as reading are each a "door in the wall."

Ginger Pye by Eleanor Estes

The story revolves around a puppy named Ginger stolen from 10 year-old Jerry and nine year-old Rachael Pye. Ginger is finally recovered from a schoolmate named Wally Bullwinkle who has kept the dog for six months. Although reading and writing are not critical aspects of plot or characterization they are related in that Jerry and Rachael often read books, letters, and the newspaper. Their reading of books is done for pleasure and also gives them background information and knowledge about a number of otherwise unknown concepts.

From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankewiler by E. L. Konigsburg

Reading is not a main theme but is related to the plot in this contemporary adventure. A sister and brother, Claudia and Jamie Kincaid, run away to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City. Claudia wants to feel appreciated at home and Jamie has money to support the adventure. Through careful reading of a newspaper article, encyclopedia, and museum materials the children are convinced that a statue titled "Angel" was sculpted by Michelangelo. Their ability to read helps solve the mystery of this statue.

Sounder by William H. Armstrong

Set in the rural south at the turn of the 19th century, a young black boy's determination to find his father is the main theme of this story. A related but not critical aspect of the plot is the boy's desire to learn to read. "One day I will learn to read," the boy says at the beginning of the book and at the end of the book "He learned to read his book with the torn cover better now." The poverty and cruelty suffered by black sharecroppers at the hands of a white society are powerfully communicated. Books are valued as sources of both pleasure and knowledge in this story.

The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

In this book of modern fiction heirs to the Westing family fortune are paired, given ten thousand dollars and clues to find an answer for which no one knows the question. Turtle, the twelve year-old main character, and the other heirs read the printed clues, newspaper articles, notes and occasional books. While not the main theme or critical to the plot, competence in reading allows the various heirs to untangle the mystery surrounding the will and is connected to the plot.

Instructional Suggestions

The preceding summaries indicate books with potential for developing positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing. These books can be used with reluctant readers who are able to read and write but lack the motivation to engage in either activity. For these students, what is read about reading and writing and reactions to what is read can be important influences on the development of positive attitudes, concepts and behaviors.

Students initially need to read books either independently or in groups as a basis for later discussions and comparisons. During reading it is important that opportunities be provided for active involvement and personal reaction to what is being read. Two strategies will be discussed, one to be used as a student reads independently and one to be used with a group. Both require oral or written participation as students summarize, retell or make predictions about what is read.

A strategy that involves the student during independent reading is suggested by Rusnak (1980). Annotated Independent Reading (AIR) uses student-selected materials and allows the teacher to monitor student progress. Rusnak suggests that students keep a reading folder to hold cumulative accounts of books and materials read and currently being read. Teacher or student prepared record sheets can be used to keep these cumulative accounts. Regularly scheduled independent reading periods of fifteen to thirty minutes are recommended. At the conclusion of each period the student can make entries on record sheets of date, pages read, main idea annotation and prediction about what will follow. An adapted version of Rusnak's record sheet for annotating follows:

Book Title			
Date	Pages	Main Idea	Prediction

Development of positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing is possible with AIR. First, some of the books from Tables 2 and 3 can be provided as materials students select for reading. In this way the teacher can offer guidance by providing alternatives while the actual materials read are selected by students. Second, making annotations provides the student with opportunities to react to what is read and participate in the reading process. Third, completed records can be quickly reviewed by the teacher as an indication of student comprehension and by the student as a review before continued reading. Completed record pages should be equivalant to a summary of an entire book and useful to the student for discussing and comparing the book later with other class members.

A teacher may want to read and discuss a particular book with a group of students and may not want to wait until each student has read the book independently. A strategy that involves a group of students in reading a book together is suggested by Childrey (1980). In this strategy chapters are torn out of a paperback book, each chapter is read by one student, summarized and reported to the class. In this way characters, plot, and theme can be identified as the whole book is read and retold in a relatively short period of time. Childrey suggests that material with a thematic coherence be used and the reading and retelling be confined to an hour. This strategy for group reading of a book can also develop positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing. First, the teacher can select a book to be read by the group in which reading or writing is important to the theme. Second, the student actively participates in the reading process by summarizing and retelling the chapter. Through oral sharing the student is involved and makes a meaningful contribution to the group's understanding of the total book. Third, possibilities exist for focusing on one element of the book such as theme or character development for the summarizing and retelling.

Following reading, opportunities can be provided for discussions of books that can further promote positive attitudes and concepts. When students engage in critical thinking to identify and manipulate elements and relationships within and between books, personal values can be developed.

All of the books have potential for discovery of cause-effect relationships. For example, students can identify the main factors for change in a character's life and the effects of these factors. Reasons why a particular character learned to read or write and the ensuing effects reading and writing had on the character's life would undoubtedly be included. Another possibility is to provide students with a number of events, ideas or relationships to be identified as cause and effect (Herber, 1978). For example, this list from A Gathering of Days can initiate further discussion of interactions among characters as they relate to reading and writing:

Directions: Parts of sentences follow. Each (C) is a possible cause and each (E) is a possible effect. For each pair of sentences look in the book on the pages listed to see if the first caused the second. Check (✓) if there is a cause-effect relationship.

1. ____ (C) Teacher Holt read from "The Liberator" to the older boys. (p. 51)
(E) A letter of apology was written to the townspeople.

2. ____ (C) Matty was sick in bed and Cathy read the Bible to her. (p. 92)
(E) Mamman wrote a letter to a Boston bookstore.

3. ____ (C) Cathy read a note left in her lesson book. (p. 20)
(E) Cathy received a parcel of lace and a note.

4. ____ (C) Father goes to the Boston coach to get his new to-be-wife's letters. (p. 71)
(E) Cathy reads a letter from her proposed new mother.

5. ____ (C) Uncle Jack brought the Boston newspaper to the family. (p. 121)
(E) Conversation centers on the slave rebellion.

When two or more books have been read comparison-contrast relationships can be explored. Examining two characters, such as Kit from Witch of Blackbird Pond and Julia from Up A Road Slowly, can provide opportunities for comparing and contrasting the different roles of reading and writing in each of the girl's lives. Purposes and functions of reading and writing in Johnny Tremain and Carry On Mr. Bowditch as well as the value placed on these activities by the

society of that day can be discussed. In contrasting books from different time periods students can gain a perspective about how the roles of reading and writing have changed for different groups throughout history.

Conclusion

One Caldecott Medal book and several Newbery Medal books have been identified in which reading or writing is a main theme or related aspect of plot or characterization. In these books reading and writing are depicted as valuable and important activities for survival, enjoyment, and the gaining and sharing of knowledge. Characters in these books routinely engage in and are committed to reading and writing and can serve as appropriate role models with which reluctant readers can identify. Positive attitudes and concepts about reading and writing can be developed when students read, personally react, and become involved with characters, plots, and themes of these books. The effective use of appropriate literature in the classroom can develop capable readers and writers who value reading and writing and are committed to these activities as useful and important sources of information, personal satisfaction and enjoyment throughout their lives.

Table I

Numbers of Caldecott and Newbery Books

and Roles of Reading and Writing

	Reading		Writing	
	Caldecott	Newbery	Caldecott	Newbery
Main Theme	1	10	0	6
Related Aspect	0	6	0	1
Incidental	2	32	1	34
Non-occurring	41	12	43	19
Total	44	60	44	60

Table 2

Books by Award and Year in Which Reading and/or Writing is a Main Theme or Critical Aspect of Plot or Characterization

Award	Year	Reading or Writing	Title
Caldecott	1940	R	Abe Lincoln by I. & E. d'Aulaire
Newbery	1934	R&W	Invincible Louisa by Cornelia Meigs
"	1937	R&W	Roller Skates by Ruth Sawyer
"	1944	R	Johnny Tremain by Esther Forbes
"	1951	R	Amos Fortune, Free Man by Elizabeth Yates
"	1956	R&W	Carry On Mr. Bowditch by Jean Lee Latham
"	1959	R&W	Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth G. Speare
"	1967	R&W	Up A Road Slowly by Irene Hunt
"	1972	R	Mrs. Frisbie and the Rats of NIMH by Robert C. O'Brien
"	1978	R	Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson
"	1980	R&W	A Gathering of Days by Joan Blos

Table 3

Books by Award and Year in Which Reading and/or Writing is a Related Aspect of Plot or Characterization

Award	Year	Reading or Writing	Title
Newbery	1933	R&W	Young Fu by Elizabeth Lewis
"	1950	R	The Door in the Wall by Marguerite de Angeli
"	1952	R	Ginger Pye by Eleanor Estes
"	1968	R	From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankeweiler by E. L. Konigsburg
"	1970	R	Sounder by William H. Armstrong
"	1979	R	The Westing Game by Ellen Raskin

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